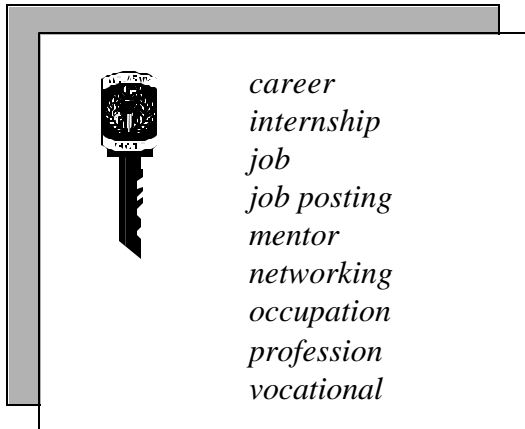


CAREER PLANNING

LESSON 1: CAREER EXPLORATION STRATEGY



INTRODUCTION

As a high school student, you are faced with many decisions. Probably the most important decision that you will soon be making will be about your future. Although some students in your class may know exactly what they want to do after graduating from high school, others may not. If you are one of those who have not yet decided, don't panic! This is the time in your life to try different things, to discover your interests, and to understand how your interests relate to career decision-making.

When determining your interests and personal preferences about a **career**, you may want to consider things such as how much education you want to pursue and whether it is important for you to find a career that has high prestige, allows you to work independently, is especially creative, or relates to other common work values.

PLANNING A CAREER STRATEGY

Developing a satisfying career requires careful planning and informed decision-making. This is an exciting time for you, but it can also be overwhelming. You must spend time gathering information, understanding what alternatives you have, and thinking about your personal preferences in regard to your career. The career decisions that you make in the next few months or years will not be the only career decisions that you will make — most people have many careers over the course of a lifetime, but the decisions you make soon will be key ones. Therefore, in order to use your career exploration strategy as a tool to help you make those important career decisions; it should focus on three tasks:

- Discovering what your aptitude, interests, abilities, and personal preferences are.
- Matching your aptitude, interests, abilities, and preferences with **occupations**.
- Learning where and how to get information on different careers.

If you have not yet decided what type of a career you would like, now is the time to start a planning a strategy that will help you to decide. In addition to teaching you career exploration skills, developing a career exploration strategy can motivate you to learn more about yourself and the occupations that you might find rewarding. Such a strategy can help you to see how your aptitude, interests, abilities, and personal preferences match career opportunities.

An effective career exploration strategy can also help you to decide whether you want to attend college, a **vocational**-technical school, join one of the military services, or go directly into the world of work after high school.

JOB VS. CAREER

What is a Job?	A piece of work, task or duty done by agreement to pay.
Example: Babysitting, Mowing Lawns	
What is a Career?	A principal business, profession , occupation or lifework.
Example: Teacher, Engineer, Writer	

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO AFTER COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL?

This is a question that you may be asking yourself. Since you have been in school most of your life, you might be wondering, “What will I do after graduation? Should I go to college or look for a **job**? Do I have any other alternatives? What about technical or vocational training? Is college something I can handle now, or should I wait until later? Do I have the resources to obtain further education? If I do try to find a job, what kind should it be? Should I join the military? How do I find out which occupations are best for me? Where will I likely succeed and be most satisfied?”

To answer those questions, you should find out as much as possible about the many career opportunities that exist, and which ones match your aptitude, interests, abilities, and personal preferences. To do all of that, you will need the following:

- Information about your aptitude, interests, abilities, and personal preferences.
- Information about the world of work, including educational requirements, work environment, and career opportunities for specific occupations.
- Information on how to match your personal characteristics to the characteristics of the world of work.

First, you must decide how you will conduct your career exploration, how many hours you plan to take in your search process, and a date when you will make a tentative decision. The time limitations you set are important. It is easy to postpone big decisions. If you commit yourself to a plan, you are less likely to become overwhelmed by such a big decision.

The deadline that you set is there to help you make timely decisions about your future. It does not mean you must make a career decision that is not changeable. You may even find it helpful to set a time in the near future to review your research. That review will give you the opportunity to see if you are still satisfied with your choices. When looking for a career, it is important to be creative. Explore all possible avenues. Use techniques such as brainstorming, researching, networking, canvassing, testing, counseling, and volunteering to assist you in making your career decisions.

Brainstorming

First, spend 10 minutes listing careers that you know you are not interested in. Next, spend another 10 minutes listing all the careers that you think may interest you. Finally, evaluate both lists. Commit yourself to exploring the possibilities you like the most. Set a date to review the list to see if you still feel the same way about the choices you

have made. Remember that you can always change your mind at any time during the career exploration process and add or delete choices from your lists as you learn more about those choices.

Researching

Two good resources, which should be available in your school career center or library, are the Occupational Outlook Handbook and the Dictionary of Occupational Titles.

- The Occupational Outlook Handbook is a career information resource produced by the U.S. Department of Labor that provides detailed information on about 250 civilian and military occupations.
- The Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) defines civilian careers and assigns them a DOT code. As a result of an extensive task analysis performed by the authors of that book, you can link comparable occupations. This capability is particularly important when linking civilian to military occupations, and vice versa, to determine occupational **counterparts**.

Other resources that you may wish to consider for obtaining information about career fields are: Dunn and Bradstreet's Million-Dollar Directory, Thomas Registry of Corporate Profiles, and Standard and Poor's Corporation Registry. These books should also be available in your school career center or library.

Your research should also include the following:

- Visit a local Job Services office. This office has more **job postings** in more occupations than any other single source.

- Use the yellow pages in the telephone book. The yellow pages group companies together according to what they do or make. Try to match your interests or abilities with a company most likely to meet them.
- Read the newspaper ads. These ads list job categories alphabetically. Remember, the type of work you can do may be listed under several different categories.
- Listen to the radio or television and read the business section of the newspaper to find out what new businesses may be opening.
- Visit local Chambers of Commerce, professional societies, or community organizations, attend trade shows, or go to industrial or craft unions.
- Contact city, county, state, and federal personnel offices.

Networking

Networking means meeting people and making contacts. It is one of the most successful ways that people learn about job or career openings. Ask your friends, relatives, or neighbors about possible careers. People who are working often hear about job openings before businesses make them public, and those people may be able to give you “the tip of a lifetime.”

Canvassing

Talk with professionals and the people who visit your school during career day. Attend the career days sponsored at most technical or vocational schools, junior or community colleges, and the major colleges and universities that are in your area. Use these events to learn about the requirements for entering into various occupations.

Additionally, make appointments with managers or other key people in the fields in which you are most interested. Generally, people will gladly take a few minutes of their time to discuss their career field with you.

Testing

There are a variety of tests that can help you determine your aptitude, interests, and abilities. In this lesson, we define aptitude as the capabilities that you have developed so far that indicate your readiness to become proficient in a certain type of activity. This may refer to your *capability to learn a particular type of work* or *your potential for general training* — both are measurements that are essential for success in determining a career.

You may have already taken a career test. Career tests match possible careers to your interests and they also give you an idea about the type of job for which you are best suited. You can obtain additional information about career tests from your instructors, the media center, or any of the school counselors.

Counseling

Guidance and/or career counselors and occupational specialists are available in most schools and communities to help you make decisions about your career. If you think you will have trouble making up your mind about a career, speak to a counselor for assistance. Counselors and occupational specialists can match your aptitude, interests, and abilities with potential jobs or career fields. Remember, it is important to start your career plan early and these counselors and occupational specialists will be able to help you.

Volunteering/Working a Summer Job

Once you make a decision about your career, consider volunteering in a job that relates to your career decision or working a summer job in that field. For example, if you want to be a teacher, find a job at a camp or

day care center. If you want to be a doctor, volunteer at a hospital. Volunteering and working part-time can help you decide if the career choice you made is right for you.

While making money may seem important, an **internship** or volunteer work in an area that interests you can be more beneficial in the long run. Besides, a job in itself is a good learning experience.

How Will a Summer Job Help My Future?

A summer job can:

- Give you work experience.
- Boost your self-esteem and make you more responsible.
- Give you references for future jobs/careers.
- Give you the chance to meet a role model or **mentor** who can help you plan your future.
- Help you grow and learn your true interests and talents.

CONCLUSION

This lesson explained the importance of career exploration skills and career planning. Specifically, it introduced a career exploration strategy, discussed how to link information about yourself to specific occupations, and showed you how to use that strategy in making career decisions. You should be able to organize information about yourself and the world of work and be able to see which occupations best fit your aptitude, interests, abilities, and preferences.